

MIRACLES AT ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT IN CORNWALL IN 1262.

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One of the chief places of pilgrimage in this country, all through the Middle Ages, was St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall. A long line of churches and chapels bordered the road that led through Cornwall to the Mount. Unfortunately we know practically nothing about what happened during these pilgrimages.

I have recently been able to examine and copy out a passage in a manuscript at Avranches, near the French Mont St. Michel (to which the Cornish Mount belonged from the 11th to the 15th century), which gives us a glimpse of the miraculous cures which, no doubt, often occurred during pilgrimages to the Mount, as they now do during pilgrimages to Lourdes.

MS. No. 159 is the most valuable book in the Public Library of Avranches, which contains what remains of the library of the Abbey of Mont St. Michel. It appears to be the original Chronicle which Abbot Robert of Torigni presented to Henry II in 1184, and which he afterwards completed, bringing it down to the time of his death in 1186. The Chronicle is preceded by three pages containing miscellaneous matter written much later, as follows: first, a story of a miraculous flame on Mont St. Michel in 1270; next, a list of books given to the Abbey of Bec by Philip, Bishop of Bayeux, in the time

of Robert of Torigni. Then, on the lower half of the second column of folio 8, which must originally have been left blank, has been squeezed in, by a later hand, the following passage: (1).

“ Nulli monasterio sancti michaelis in Cornubia accedenti vertatur in dubium quin quaedam mulier nomine christina (2) de partibus glastonie per sex fere annos oculorum luminibus orbata ad dictum monasterium orationis et peregrinationis causa cum maxima deuotione accedens ii ydus maii anno domini m cc lx ii ante magnam missam quadam die dominica in conspectu populi in maxima fide perseuerans intercessionem beati archangeli michaelis clausorum recuperauit diuinitus lumen oculorum testibus presentibus quamplurimis religiosis & aliis. Eodem anno iii ydus junii quedam mulier nomine matildis de parrochia lanescli que per duos dies & duas noctes sensum amiserat & loquelam a parentibus suis ducta ad illud monasterium die dominica statim cum intrasset ecclesiam precibus celestis milicie principis sensui & loquela fuit restituta. Ego vidi & interfui. erat tunc temporis prior illius loci Radulfus viel. Eodem anno quedam iuuenula nomine alicia de partibus de herefort engales nata per septem annos elapsos oculorum luminibus orbata ad dictam ecclesiam orationis et peregrinationis causa cum maxima deuotione accedens iiii kal. Februarii ante solis ortum quadam die lune in maxima fide persuerans precibus beati michaelis archangeli clausorum recuperauit diuinitus lumen oculorum erant tunc temporis socii illius loci

(1) Part of this passage was printed by de Wailly, Delisle and Jourdain, in their *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* (Paris, Imp. Nat., 1896, in folio) tome XXIII, pp. 572, 573.

(2) I had myself read this name, which is much abbreviated, as *Joanna*.

petrus de vallibus eng(elrannus) de baiocis mauricius taboeier quando illa iiii miracula in illa ecclesia acciderunt quartum miraculum de quodam muto est in principio huius libri in vii folio anno domini mclxii xiii kal septembris." (1).

Translation.

"Let no one going to the Monastery of St. Michael in Cornwall doubt that a certain woman, named Christina, of the neighbourhood of Glastonbury, who had been deprived of the sight of her eyes for about six years, coming with the greatest devotion to the said monastery for the sake of prayer and pilgrimage, on 14th May, 1262, before High Mass, on a certain Sunday, in the sight of the people, persevering in the greatest faith, by the intercession of the Blessed Archangel Michael, recovered miraculously (lit. *divinely*) the sight of her closed eyes. There were present as witnesses many monks and others. In the same year, on the 11th June, a certain woman named Matilda, of the parish of Lanescli (Gulval), who for two days and two nights had lost consciousness and the power of speech, being brought by her parents to that monastery, on Sunday, immediately she had entered the church, by the prayers of the Captain of the Heavenly Chivalry, was restored to consciousness and power of speech. I saw it and was present. The Prior of that place then was Ralph Viel. In the same year a certain girl named Alice, of the parts of Hereford, born in Wales, who for seven years past had been deprived of the sight of her eyes, coming with the greatest devotion to the said church for the sake of prayer and pilgrimage on the 29th of January, before the

(1) I have retained the original spelling and punctuation (or rather want of punctuation!) only expanding the abbreviations. The reference to the fourth miracle is omitted by de Wailly, Delisle and Jourdain.

rising of the sun, on a certain Monday, persevering in the greatest faith, by the prayers of the Blessed Archangel Michael recovered miraculously the sight of her closed eyes. The *socii* of that place then were Peter De Vallibus, Engelran of Bayeux, Maurice Taboeier, when those four miracles happened in that church. The fourth miracle, on a certain dumb man, is in the beginning of this book on page 7, in the year of Our Lord 1262, on the 20th August."

This passage is of the greatest interest to students of Cornish history.

The reader will have noticed the constant recurrence of the same form of words. It looks as if a register of cures (from which, perhaps, this entry was copied) was kept at the Mount, and cases of healing entered in it according to a stereotyped formula. We cannot suppose that in the year 1262, and only in that year, neither before or after, cases of miraculous healing occurred at St. Michael's Mount.

The personal names are a specially interesting feature. The passage gives us the name of a Prior of St. Michael's Mount earlier than any hitherto recorded. *Vyell* is found as a Christian name in some old Cornish families (e.g., the Vyvyans) at a later period (1). The *socii* at the Mount (whoever they were) were evidently all Normans. "Eng." is almost certainly an abbreviation for Engelrannus, later Engeran, "a name," M. Bourde de la Rogerie tells me, "fairly common all over Normandy." "Engelrannus, filius Iiberti," signs a charter of 1089 (Livre Rouge de Bayeux, I. 126). M. de la Rogerie cannot explain *Taboeier*. He says there is a

(1) *Viall* is still found as a surname in Cornwall.

tradesman in Avranches called *Tabur*, and I have myself observed the name *Tabourel* on a tombstone there. *Lanescli*, the home of Matilda, is now called Gulval, but the name survives as *Lanisley*, the manorhouse adjoining the church. It is in full view of the Mount. The other pilgrims came from much further away. It is rather puzzling that the words "in Wales" should be in French and not in Latin.

It is not easy to see what is meant by "*socii*." M. de la Rogerie suggests that they were either "persons having a share in the prayers of the monks, or associated with them in their daily life there." Du Cange explains *societas* as meaning "an association between the monks of different monasteries, by which they shared with each other all their good things and were treated as brethren of the same house."

Unfortunately the page containing the record of the fourth miracle has disappeared.

As to the author of this curious entry, and why he wrote it in the book at Mont St. Michel, we have no clue to guide us. He says "I saw it, and was present," but does not sign his name. Since the Prior of St. Michael's Mount, or a monk deputed by him, was bound, according to Abbot Bernard's charter, to attend the General Chapter at the Norman Mount each year, either on the Feast of St. Aubert (18 June) or at Michaelmas, and bring 16 silver marks, it may have been a monk sent from the Cornish Mount in 1262 or soon after who made the entry.

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